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Peaches

L. I. ...
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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, August 17, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 104 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Now on the consuming side of this big crop of peaches, here's Ruth Van Deman ready to take over.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, I don't believe I can quite take over 46 million bushels.

KADDERLY:

No, no, I know you can work miracles with food, but that would be asking a little too much.--But, I thought maybe you home economics people had invented some new ways of serving peaches - - -

VAN DEMAN:

We haven't really tried to find new ways. And I doubt if we could improve very much on the old ones---peach shortcake---peach cobbler---peach ice cream---peaches and plain cream.

To me peaches are such a perfect fruit they don't need much dressing up in the kitchen.

KADDERLY:

True, very true. You encourage me, Ruth, to make a confession.

VAN DEMAN:

It's said to be good for the soul.

KADDERLY:

The way I like to eat peaches best of all is right off the tree,---out in the orchard---with bees humming around---and the warm sun bringing out that rich fragrance of rosy-cheeked ripe peaches.---You just reach up and pick a nice soft, juicy one, and break it open, and flip out the seed, and---ur r r p - - -

VAN DEMAN:

Watch that juice. Peach makes an ugly brown stain on a white shirt.

KADDERLY:

Never mind that. Your stain bulletin will tell me how to take it out. And, Ruth, don't you know I can't bother with a realistic detail like a stain when I'm eating an imaginary peach under an imaginary tree?

VAN DEMAN:

Sorry to intrude a practical note. But your description was so realistic I could see the peach juice running down your fingers.

(over)

KADDERLY:

Certainly it was a freestone. Didn't you see me break it open?

VAN DEMAN:

Well, if you'll allow me to be practical again, I'll say that freestones are the kind I prefer to can in the home kitchen.

KADDERLY:

And I hope clingstones are the kind you like to make into peach pickles.

VAN DEMAN:

I do.

KADDERLY:

But I'll take any kind I can get in peach preserves.

VAN DEMAN:

And peach butter.

KADDERLY:

Oh me, oh my. Now that you remind me of peach butter---rich, smooth, spicy peach butter---why, that's as good in its way as a ripe peach eaten under the tree.

VAN DEMAN:

I'm glad you're so enthusiastic about peaches and peach products. But I really do have to be practical now, in earnest.

KADDERLY:

All right, I have a practical question for you. What about that easy way of getting the skins off peaches for canning?

VAN DEMAN:

The lye bath, you mean?

KADDERLY:

I thought it was just boiling water.

VAN DEMAN:

That is one way. Just dip the peaches into boiling water for about half a minute, until the skins will slip easily. Then plunge them into cold water for a few seconds, and the skins can be slipped right off.

Sometimes if you're canning a bushel or two of very firm peaches, a hot lye bath will give quicker results---in fact, it will partly dissolve the peach skin. You have to be very, very careful with hot lye though if there are children around. For lye is a powerful caustic. And also you have to be very careful to rinse the peaches at once, in running water if possible, immediately after you give them the hot dip. Otherwise they will turn brown. And you have to can them immediately.

KADDERLY:

Your canning bulletin of course gives the exact directions for mixing that lye bath.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, under the section on canning peaches.

KADDERLY:

We'll check on the full title and number of that canning bulletin in just a few minutes.

VAN DEMAN:

It's the only home canning bulletin the Department of Agriculture has. We understand what's wanted when anybody says canning bulletin.

Some people like peaches canned in a medium sirup---that is, 5 pounds of sugar to a gallon of water. Others don't want them that sweet. They use only 2 or 3 pounds of sugar to the gallon of water.

KADDERLY:

Do you cook the peaches in that sirup before you put them in the jars?

VAN DEMAN:

Or tin cans, you can use either jars or cans.---Yes, we think it's best to simmer peaches in the sirup for 5 to 10 minutes before packing them in the containers. That doesn't mean cooking them 'till they're soft. It's hardly more than heating them through and through---to drive some of the air out of the tissues and make them more flexible to pack. You can get more peaches into a can after they're precooked. And the same is true if you pack the halves pit side down in overlapping layers.

Then fill up the containers with hot sirup and process in a boiling-water bath for 15 minutes. That's when you precook and pack hot.

If you put the peaches in the containers cold and raw and add the hot sirup, then you have to run the processing much longer.

KADDERLY:

Ruth, I keep thinking about that good peach butter. Do you have the directions for making that on tap somewhere?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, that's along with the home-made jellies, jams, and preserves in F. B. 1800.

Peach butter is an excellent way to use the very ripe peaches---ones too soft to can attractively but still sound and fine flavored. The main thing about making any kind of fruit butter is having the patience to watch it and cook it down slowly toward the last---'till it gets that smooth butter consistency. You have to stir it almost constantly to keep it from sticking to the kettle and scorching.

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KADDERLY:

How much sugar do you use?

VAN DEMAN:

About half as much sugar as peach pulp.

We think it's best to crush the peaches first, after you remove the skins and pits, and cook them up in their own juice, until they're soft. Then press that peach pulp through a colander and measure it. And add half as much sugar as you have peach pulp.

KADDERLY:

A pint of sugar, in other words, to a quart of peach pulp.

VAN DEMAN:

Right. And a little bit of salt, about a sixteenth of a teaspoonful to each quart. The salt seems to make the sugar sweeter.

KADDERLY:

Then you put it on the stove to bubble and boil.

VAN DEMAN:

Simmer and stir. That's where you have to watch it. And finally you spice and seal.

KADDERLY:

I'm afraid I can't carry all that in my mind. I think I'd better take home a copy of F. B. 1800.

VAN DEMAN:

Maybe that would be safer. We'll order one sent to you from the Bureau of Home Economics. And I'll expect a report on the peach butter.

KADDERLY:

I might even bring you a taste.

VAN DEMAN:

That would be a surprise.

KADDERLY:

A peach of a surprise.---Well, Farm and Home friends, just as a follow-up on these suggestions of Ruth Van Deman's about saving some of our present surplus of peaches for eating next winter, I'll repeat the titles of the two bulletins. Both these bulletins are free.---"Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats" and "Home-made Jellies, Jams, and Preserves".

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